

What is a Priority Groundwater Management Area (PGMA) ?

To enable effective management of the state's groundwater resources in areas where critical groundwater problems exist or may exist in the future, the Legislature has authorized the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ or Commission), the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to study, identify, and delineate priority groundwater management areas (PGMAs), and initiate the creation of groundwater conservation districts (GCDs or districts) within those areas, if necessary. "Critical groundwater problems" are defined as shortages of surface water or groundwater, land subsidence resulting from withdrawal of groundwater, or contamination of groundwater.

The PGMA process provided in Chapter 35 of the Texas Water Code is implemented by TCEQ rules that outline procedures for the designation of PGMAs and address issues related to the creation of GCDs in areas which have been designated as PGMAs. These TCEQ rules are contained in Chapters 293 and 294 of Title 30, Texas Administrative Code.

Eighteen PGMA studies and five PGMA update studies have been completed to date. Eight PGMAs have been designated – three by TCEQ rules under previous statutory provisions and five by Commission Order. The study areas that have been designated as PGMAs include:

(1) parts of Reagan, Upton, and Midland counties; (2) all of Swisher and parts of Briscoe and Hale counties; (3) part of Dallam County; (4) part of El Paso County; (5) all of Bandera, Blanco, Gillespie, Kendall, and Kerr and parts of Bexar, Comal, Hays, and Travis counties (Hill Country area); (6) Northern Bexar County; (7) all of Bosque, Coryell, Hill, McLennan, and Somervell counties; and, (8) all of Collin, Cooke, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Fannin, Grayson, Hood, Johnson, Montague, Parker, Tarrant, and Wise counties. The TCEQ has determined that 10 of the PGMA study areas do not meet the criteria for designation and no further evaluation is planned.

Locally-initiated GCD creation, or addition of territory to an existing district, has occurred in five of the PGMAs designated before September 1, 2001. However, areas remain in each PGMA that have not yet established a GCD. Successful district creation has not occurred in the designated parts of Briscoe, Comal, Dallam, Dallas, Midland, Travis, and Upton counties. In January 2009, the TCEQ's Executive Director petitioned the Commission for the establishment of GCDs in the Dallam County PGMA and the proposition was defeated by the voters of Dallam County. On February 17, 2010, the Commission issued an order recommending three areas in the Dallam County PGMA be added to the North Plains GCD. The North Plains GCD board of directors approved the Commission order recommending the addition of three areas on March 9, 2010 and scheduled and held an election on November 2, 2010. The 82nd Legislature or the TCEQ will create a GCD before November 2, 2011. Establishment of GCDs in the Comal and Travis County portions of the Hill County PGMA is presently in the administrative hearing process. Efforts are also underway to start the GCD creation petition process in two additional PGMAs in Fiscal Years 2011-2012.

For reports, maps, and additional information related to the on-going PGMA process in the state, go to TCEQ's PGMA webpage at http://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/water_supply/groundwater/pgma.html and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service's *Priority Groundwater Management Areas: Overview and Frequently Asked Questions* at <http://tcebookstore.org/pubinfo.cfm?pubid=2266>.

For additional Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) related to groundwater quantity, groundwater quality, septic systems, water wells, administrative entities, and publications, visit the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee's FAQ webpage at <http://www.tgpc.state.tx.us/FAQs.htm>.